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Portland parking study results released

Main Street parking study finds space available downtown

By *TOM THELEN*
thelen@lsj.com

PORTLAND - Parking in downtown Portland may not be as bad a problem as most people think.

Patrick Reagan, Main Street director, addressed the Portland City Council July 19 with the results of a downtown parking survey conducted by the Main Street Design Committee.

"In every small downtown there is always a question of parking," said Reagan.

"Parking is always at a premium and the question is if there is enough parking.

Based on these observations, there is enough parking."

The survey discovered that on average there were 15 spaces available in the 100 block of Kent Street, 17.8 spaces available in the 200 block of Kent Street, six spaces available on Bridge Street between the bridge and Maple Street, and 10.4 spaces available on Maple Street between Grand River Avenue and Academy Street.

As for city parking lots, the city hall parking lot has an average of six spaces available.

The Maple Street lot has 10 spaces available.

The Scout Park lot has just under two spaces available. And the lot at Canal Street and Bridge Street has an average of 36 spaces available.

"We conducted this survey over a three-week period and at different times of the day," said Reagan.

"And every time that we went out we found spaces available, especially in the first two blocks of Kent Street.

The spot may not be right in front of the business that a person wants to go to, but there is available parking."

Reagan said the survey found that the city parking lots, particularly the Canal Street lot were being underutilized.

"As an incentive, the Design Committee has been going out a random times and placing 10 percent off coupons to Cheeky Monkeys on cars that were using a city parking lot," said Reagan.

"It is a way to thank them for coming to downtown as well as saving a parking space for business customers."

Reagan said the Design Committee will continue to evaluate the parking situation in the downtown area.

"We realize that there are different times of the week when parking is at a super premium and we realize there may be some parking headaches," said Reagan.

"But I believe this is a better alternative than having hundreds of available parking spots downtown.

I would rather have this problem."

Land use planning

The council also addressed two resolutions dealing with land use planning for the 58-acre parcel at Grand River Avenue and Cutler Road.

First, the council approved an amendment to the city's master plan that includes a plan for developing the parcel.

Also, council members approved a proposal from LSL Planning to prepare zoning ordinance amendments at a cost of \$6,700 plus reimbursable expenses, such as mileage, printing, etc.

City manager Tom Dempsey said the city's Economic Development Corporation is looking for regulations that encourage a professional campus atmosphere.

"We are talking about a multi-use style of building where there may be retail on the first floor and office space on the second," said Dempsey.

"We are looking at areas that could bring in a head of household type of job.

But we also want to have a building that can have multiple uses."

Council member Joel VanSlambrouck added that there was space along Grand River Avenue that could be used for retail establishments.

"We do not have a philosophy of 'If we build it they will come' with this property," said VanSlambrouck.

"We want to have the developers come to use with their site plans for us to consider rather than build and wait for someone to show up."

Cost savings

In his city manager's report, Dempsey informed the council that the city renewed its property and liability insurance coverage with the Michigan Municipal League (MML) after also receiving a bid from the Par Plan.

The MML bid was \$90,293, which was about \$15,000 lower than what the city paid for the same insurance through the MML last year.

Dempsey also noted that the city's existing contract with Volunteer Energy for natural gas saved the city about 14 percent compared to the rate the city would have paid through Consumer's Energy.
